

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

14-142 Orleans B EAS.161
NRDIS 1999

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Eastham Center

Photograph



Address: 285 Samoset Road

Historic Name: Eldad Higgins Carriage House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Carriage House

Date of Construction: ca. 1885

Source: Form B for 295 Samoset Road, EAS.72

Style/Form: Second Empire

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Unknown

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Wood shingles, asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
Addition (2007)

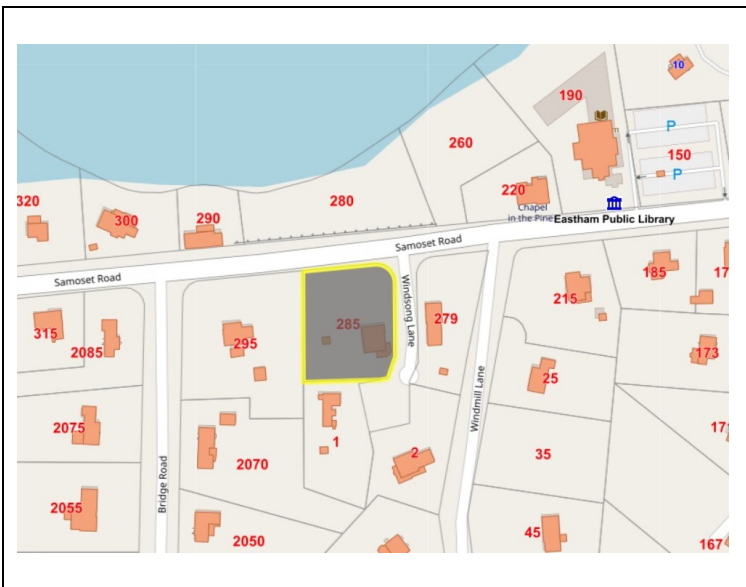
Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.58 acres

Setting: This property is located within the Eastham Center National Register District. The parcel is on the south side of Samoset Road across the street from Depot Pond. The surrounding area includes a mix of mid-19th to mid-20th century houses, a church, and library, most set close to the street. This house is set back from the street on a slight rise. The parcel is left open in front of the house and is landscaped with lawn. A gravel driveway leads up to the west side of the house.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

285 SAMOSET ROAD

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Capt. Eldad Higgins Carriage House, built in ca. 1885, is one of three examples of the Second Empire style in Eastham Center National Register District. The rectangular building rises one story to a mansard roof which is the signature element of the style. The steeply-pitched lower roof slope is clad in wood shingles, with upper course now clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally). Dormer windows are set into each lower roof slope. A small, brick stove chimney rises through the rear roof slope. The elevations are clad in wood shingles, and do not appear to have cornerboards (i.e. the shingles wrap the corners).

The main entrance is centered on an enclosed porch on the front elevation that may have originally been open, as it is on the west side elevation. Fenestration includes modern, thermal 3/1 double-hung windows. It is unknown if that was the original muntin pattern. At the rear (southwest) corner of the building, there is a narrow ell of similar height to the main block that is capped by a hip roofed tower.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This house is located within the Eastham Center National Register District - a small, semi-rural village cluster located near the town's geographic center. Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

This property began as the carriage house connected to the Capt. Eldad Higgins House to the west at 295 Samoset Road (EAS.72). The Form B for that property, prepared in 2020, provides the following account, with some edits, up to 1940. In September 1885, Eastham fisherman William Henry Nickerson (1841-1915) sold 3.75 acres of land to Eldad Higgins for \$75, a sum that suggests that no house was standing on the parcel at the time.¹ Nickerson was the son of Joshua Walker Nickerson (1805-68) and his wife Mercy Walker (1804-81), and he had inherited much of his father's farm located on the west side of the northern part of Bridge Road, and which probably included land as far north as Samoset Road.

Eldad Higgins (1838-1919) was the son Benjamin Higgins Jr. (1808-80) and his wife Hannah (1806-72), daughter of Daniel and Polly Higgins of Wellfleet. Eldad Higgins' father was a mariner and fisherman, and Eldad was working as a mariner when he married Paulina Knowles, daughter of William F. and Betsy Knowles of Eastham. He is often referred to as "Captain Eldad Higgins" because he worked as a vessel master. By 1880, the Higginses had one son, Wallace, and were farming in the Nauset section of Eastham. In April 1883, the *Barnstable Patriot* noted that Eldad Higgins was "making improvements" to his father's house, then

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 165/ Page 308.

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occupied by the superintendent of the French cable station. In March 1884, after the death of longtime Eastham depot agent N. P. Knowles, Eldad Higgins was appointed to take his place. The new job must have impelled his move to the town center. The *Barnstable Patriot* reported in late October 1885 that "carpenters have commenced to frame the new house of Mr. Eldad Higgins."² Higgins also served the towns as an assessor, town meeting moderator, selectman, field viewer, and school committee member between the early 1880s and about 1910. The 1900 census lists Higgins in this neighborhood as a railroad station agent, and he and his wife were enumerated in a household next to that of William H. and Dora Nickerson. He retired as depot master in 1907. He died in 1919, and in 1920 Wallace Higgins, acting as estate executor, sold the 295 Samoset Road property, totaling 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres (that stretched east to 279 Samoset Road) to Tamson Addie Nickerson, who had acquired an adjacent third of an acre from William Henry Nickerson in 1913 (what is now 315 Samoset Road, EAS.1314).³

Tamson A. Clark Nickerson (1873-1945) was the widow of William Horton Nickerson (1867-1912), the son of Nathan B. and Phebe Horton Nickerson. The daughter of John A. and Tamson Clark, she had married in 1892 and had five children - Alta H., Irma C., Susan H., Abigail F., and Nathan A. - between 1892 and 1904. By 1920 she was living in the Samoset Road house with her youngest children, Abby and Nathan, and running an asparagus farm. Eastham tax records for 1926 credited her with the house, valued at \$2000, a barn, an outbuilding, a poultry house, her 3.75-acre homestead lot, and 16.5 acres in other parcels throughout town. By 1930 both children had moved out, and Tamson Nickerson (Addie T. in that year's census) was Eastham's postmaster. In 1937, the town taxed her on a "post office" valued at \$150 along with her house, a second house, two garages, an outbuilding, a water system, and nearly 30 acres. At that time she shared 295 Samoset Road with two young children, Robert and Eleanor Pierson, who still lived with her in 1940.

In 1940, Tamson sold the eastern portion of her property to her son, Nathan A. Nickerson, including what is now 285 and 279 Samoset Road.⁴ Nathan Atwood Nickerson (1903-1971) married Avis Evelyn Briggs (1902-1990) in 1924 in Brewster. By the 1930 census they were living in Eastham next to his mother, very likely in this house, and he was working as a road surveyor, a job he held through the 1950 census.

In August of 1959, Nathan Nickerson sold the parcel to Elnathan E. Eldredge of Eastham.⁵ It may have been Elnathan that converted this carriage house into a dwelling. In November of 1959, Eldredge recorded a subdivision of the parcel into 4 lots with this building on Lot 1 (Figure 2).⁶ This property was likely purchased as an investment. Elnathan Edwin Eldredge, Jr. (1897-1977) was born in Orleans, the son of a cranberry grower. He also worked as a cranberry grower, and in 1929 purchased 56± acres of marsh and cranberry swamp at the end of North Sunken Meadow Road. Based on census records through 1940, he was living in Orleans. By 1950, however, he was living on Sunken Meadow Road with his second wife, Emma Frances (Snow), whom he married in 1949, and he was working in real estate sales and rentals.

In 1961, Elnathan sold this Lot 1 to Dorothy K. Boyd of Truro.⁷ She was living here in 1980 when she sold it to Joseph E. and Ethel F. Baker of Eastham. Ethel survived her husband, and in 2003, her estate sold the house to Mark A. and Jennifer Cabrial of Boston.⁸ That same year, they sold it to Catherine Sugg and Wendy Valli of Wellfleet.⁹ They appear to have purchased this house as an investment; they were still living in Wellfleet in 2005 when they sold it to the current owners. Timothy J. and Barbara W. Maher of Milton, MA.¹⁰

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² "Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 19 February 1884, 3; 11 March 1884, 3; and 20 October 1885, 3.

³ Book 361/ Page 548.

⁴ Book 564/ Page 388.

⁵ Book 1053/ Page 204. Elnathan Eldredge had also bought and sold numerous cottage lots near Campground Road in the early 1950s.

⁶ Plan Book 152/ Page 145.

⁷ Book 1131/ Page 321.

⁸ Book 16233/ Page 309.

⁹ Book 17378/ Page 200.

¹⁰ Book 20078/ Page 157.

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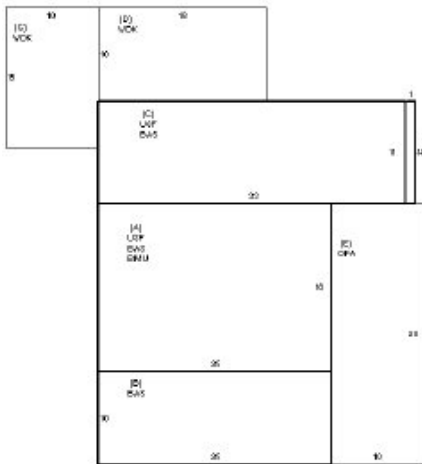


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Samoset Road, looking south.

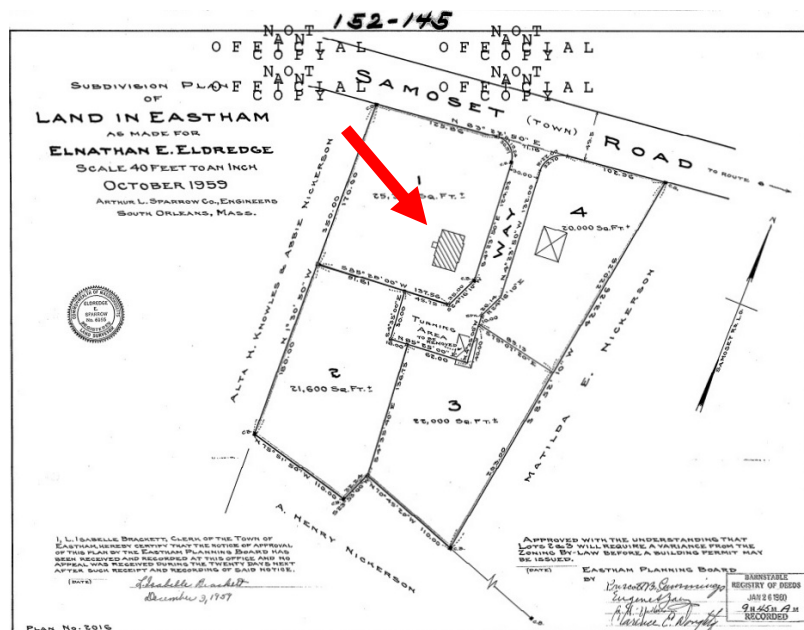


Figure 2. October 1959 Subdivision Plan for Elnathan Eldredge (arrow to 285 Samoset Road added).